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somewhat more than two feet wide. The bottom is broken away, but its height was probably greater than its breadth. About the picture are drawn, as a frame, two lines, one black, the other a dark red. Inside this frame is a warrior armed with helmet (the plume of which as well as the metal part is not colored), spear, and shield. The design on the shield is a dancing black satyr with a long, red tail. Besides his armor, the warrior wears a red chiton and over this a black himation. The ideas of perspective, both in the relative position of the arms and the shield, are very much confused. Above, on a level with his head, are two words; the one on the right is distinct and reads *χαλός*; the other may be *Παλαμήδης* but cannot be read with certainty.

IV. INSCRIPTIONS. Quite a number of archaic inscriptions, on fragments of columns and on bases, have been found: they are partly metrical, formulæ of dedication to Athena, etc.

ATHENS, GREECE, Feb. 12, 1886.

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of Classical studies.*

THE "MONUMENTAL TORTOISE" MOUNDS OF "DE-COO-DAH."

[Plate II.]

In the year 1853 a very queer book was published at New York, entitled *Traditions of De-coo-dah and Antiquarian Researches*, etc. The author was one William Pidgeon, a former trader among the Indians of the upper Mississippi. The book contained many drawings of symmetrical and intricate earthworks in the north-western States and Territories of the Union, together with a key to the history and signification of the same as given by De-coo-dah himself—"the last prophet of the Elk nation." The illustrations, however, were so novel, the classification of the mounds so elaborate and fantastic, and the traditions so wholly unsupported, that the work was not at that time, nor for years afterwards, recognized as authoritative; and was not mentioned by compilers of American pre-historic matters, such as Baldwin, Foster, etc. The fact is, that inspection of the best-known works on American antiquities, like those of Atwater, Squier and Davis or Whittlesey, showed but little, if anything, to justify the formal and significant shapes and positions of Pidgeon's embankments and effigies, and nothing at all to confirm the systematic arrangements of ordinary round mounds pictured so liberally in his book.

It sometimes happens, as students of cartography and geography well know, that a mistake made by some one is so often copied, unwittingly, by

others, that it becomes to the world at large an established fact. In like manner, Mr. Pidgeon's statements, which were not accepted by the Smithsonian Institution, the American Antiquarian Society, and other authorities of thirty years ago, are now gradually appearing in standard works on American archæology. Conant, in his *Footprints of Vanished Races* (1879), evidently accepts Pidgeon's earthworks, for he copies five diagrams of the geometrical kind and three of the effigy-shaped ones, not to mention a large part of the traditional matter. Bancroft, in Vol. 4 of his *Native Races of the Pacific States*, places Pidgeon and Lapham on an equal footing, as the original discoverers of the "effigy mounds." Ellen Russell Emerson, in her *Indian Myths*, etc., of the Aborigines of America (1884), quotes largely from "De-coo-dah," laying much stress on the symbolism. In Nadaillac's *Pre-historic America*, seven of the diagrams are given, as furnishing authentic information; but, curiously enough, although Pidgeon is accredited with having, in 1853, first brought the subject of animal-mounds to the notice of the public, this information has been obtained indirectly through the work of Conant above referred to. The expert bibliographer now conducting Sabin's *Dictionary* (1885), though deploring Pidgeon's "baseless hypotheses and unreliable traditions," seems not to doubt the value of the "very clear illustrations of many remains of Indian structures." With such conspicuous bell-wethers, doubtless other writers will, like unsuspecting sheep, take a like course, unless some one cry, Halt! Even Lucien Carr, a stout champion of the theory that the North-American mounds and inclosures "were the work of the red Indians of historic times, or of their immediate ancestors," writing in one of the publications of the Kentucky Geological Survey, narrowly escapes the precipice, for he thinks that the mounds can be sufficiently well treated under three heads, with the possible "exception of the animal-mounds, about which nothing definite is known," "unless (as he adds in a foot-note) the explanation given in that curious book, 'The Traditions of De-coo-dah,' should be accepted as authority, and this is scarcely advisable in the present state of our knowledge."

I do not want to be understood as charging Mr. Pidgeon with a deliberate and intentional fabrication of arrangements and conformations of earthworks which are entirely without example; but I have reason to know that it is not safe to quote his statements as authority, having personally examined many of the localities described by him. I will now treat of a particular point in "De-coo-dah," as a justification for writing this letter.

In chapters 5 and 8 of the book in question, among other things, will be found an account of a group of mounds on the Minnesota River (then St. Peter's River), visited by Pidgeon in 1840. According to his

narrative, he, in company with some French traders, ascended the river about sixty miles, when they arrived in the neighborhood of an Indian village, situated some two miles from the river, or presumably from their landing place; the natives there informed him that not far distant from them, up the river, were many mounds; he went to the spot and ascertained, by their agreement with De-coo-dah's description, that they were the mounds of which he was in search,—the "Title mound of the Black Tortoise" with its accompanying symmetrically arranged tumuli and embankments, erected to commemorate "the title and dignity of a great king or potentate," and for sepulchral purposes. Naturally enough, my curiosity was excited on reading about so wonderful a place, and I determined to make thorough search for it whenever a surveying trip should lead me in that direction, as the distance given by Pidgeon indicated a definite locality, namely, a point not far from the mouth of High Island Creek, a stream entering the Minnesota River from the west.

In October 1884, therefore, being in this vicinity, I took occasion to hunt up this "Black" or "Monumental Tortoise" collection of earthworks, in order to verify Mr. Pidgeon's account of it. After a thorough search, I found there but one group of mounds, which was situated on the N. W. quarter, section 26, Township 113, of Range 26, having on the north and west the valley of the creek above mentioned. Between this site and the Minnesota River was once an Indian village; and a great battle is said, on good authority, to have once taken place between the Dakotas and the Ojibways in that neighborhood. Under these circumstances, together with the fact that one of the mounds near the centre of this group corresponded to the "Black Tortoise" itself, I had no hesitation in coming to the conclusion that these earthworks were the same ones that Mr. Pidgeon described.

I now surveyed the entire group, taking the relative position of each mound with its diameter by tape line, and ascertaining its height by spirit-level. In order to make plain the difference between the appearance in the plan of the mounds most nearly central in position, as given by Mr. Pidgeon, and that which they actually present on the ground, I have prepared two outline diagrams for comparative study (*plate II*).

Figure 1 is copied from the original plate in "De-coo-dah," the shape of the mounds there given being exactly reproduced by the full lines. As, however, some of the dimensions found in the text vary from the engraving as scaled, a dotted line is added in such cases to indicate the variation in form thus produced. These differences, however, may arise from clerical errors, or perhaps be the fault of the draughtsman or engraver.

Figure 2 is plotted from my own field-notes, and, in order to show the mounds surrounding the "Tortoise," covers a somewhat larger space than the area pictorially occupied by Mr. Pidgeon's group.

It will be noticed that the central figure of both diagrams is practically the same; but there the resemblance ceases—unless we indentify his council-chiefs' mound with my No. 37. The relative positions of the mounds to each other, also, were probably, in the first case, merely sketched as they appeared, or seemed to appear, to Mr. Pidgeon from a given point. His heights and dimensions were undoubtedly mere estimates, and very poor ones at that. But how account for mounds of shapes so radically different from those that any other man ever heard of before or since our author's time? Or why so many more mounds represented than actually exist immediately around this central mound or tortoise?

Another puzzling point to be considered is the great disproportion between the heights and diameters of the mounds described in "De-coodah." For instance, the author describes the "prophets' burial-mounds," situated next the central figure, on the east and west, as being twelve feet long, six feet wide, and four feet high. The following table gives the height and diameter of the principal mounds of the group, according to the book, together with the deduced ratios of the two dimensions.

Name or Kind.	Cross-section.		Ratio.		Position on plan (Fig. 1).
	Height.	Diameter.	Height.	Diameter.	
Monumental Tortoise,	12	27	44	100	In centre.
Mounds of extinction,	6	7	86	"	{ Immediately N. and S. of centre.
Mourning mounds,	12	27	44	"	At the four corners.
Points of royal honor,	8	12	67	"	{ Outside line, E. and W. of centre.
Prophets' burial-mounds,	4	6	67	"	{ Immediately E. and W. of centre.
War-chiefs' burial-memorial,	12	27	44	"	Outside line, S. of centre.
Council-chiefs' memorial,	4	22	18	"	Outside line, N. of centre.

Any one at all familiar with the works of the Mound-builders will see, at a glance, that mounds thus proportioned (except the last one) are improbabilities, to say the least; as the figures of the first six lines imply angles, with a horizontal plane, of from 41 to 60 degrees. For my part, I can state that of the six largest conical mounds measured by me in various localities, ranging between 12 and 18 feet in height, the ratio of height

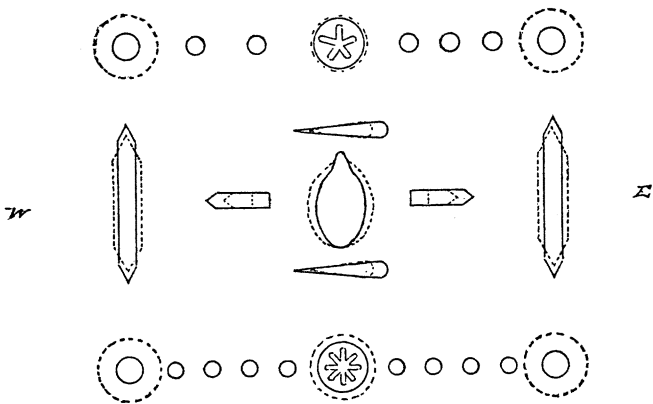
to base was from 15 to $19\frac{1}{2}$ to 100, equivalent in angle to from $16\frac{1}{2}$ to $21\frac{1}{2}$ degrees. In the case of a seventh, however, a truncated mound twelve feet high, situated on the Crow River, Minnesota, the proportion was 28 to 100, or an angle of $29\frac{1}{2}$ degrees with the horizon. If such departures from all likelihood existed in this instance only, they could be overlooked: but they occur in the descriptions of all the groups that Pidgeon mentions as having been surveyed by him in the North-West, and cannot be ascribed to blunders made in connection with the publication of his book.

Besides the Minnesota River group, I have visited and critically examined other localities described by our author in south-western Wisconsin and north-eastern Iowa, and in addition have made many inquiries, of old settlers, concerning him and his claims. At Trempeleau, Wisconsin, I talked with the daughter of his one-time host, the Kentuckian who had a squaw wife. The result of all my researches in this respect is to convince me that the Elk nation and its last prophet De-coo-dah are modern myths, which have never had any objective existence; and that, consequently, the ancient history in the volume is of no more account than that of the Lost Tribes in the Book of Mormon.

T. H. LEWIS.

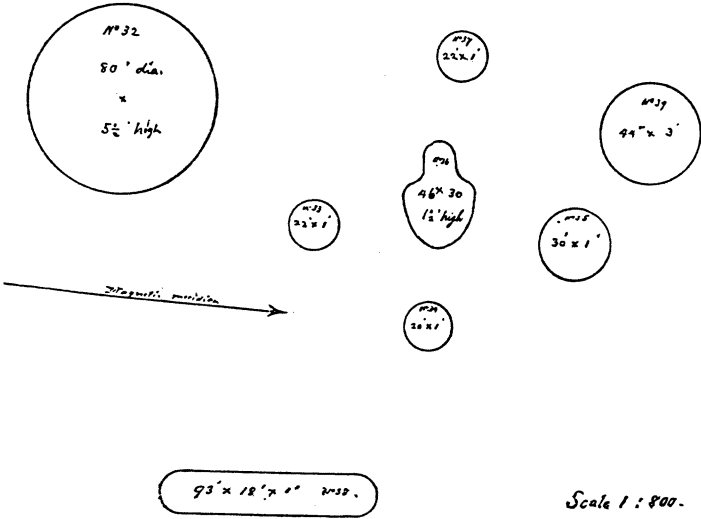
ST. PAUL, MINNESOTA, December 28, 1885.

Figure 1. Fiction.



Scale 1 : 800.

Figure 2. Fact.



Scale 1 : 800.